



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



CODINGTON COUNTY NAMES NEW VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Codington County Commission has selected Todd Rose as their new county veterans service officer. Todd replaces Al Janzen who retired April 17. Al served as the Codington County VSO since May of 1998.

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Todd to our partnership and thanking Al for his commitment and dedication in serving our veterans and their families.

Todd has resided in Watertown since 2001 with his wife Sheila and their three children; Kahlab, Meghan and Emily. Todd grew up in Flandreau and enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard in May 1985 as a field artillery cannoneer. He served in numerous positions and locations around the state during his 31 years of service with 26 years working fulltime for the Army National Guard. He has two deployments, one with the 2 / 147th Field Artillery from December 2003 – February 2005 to Iraq and one with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade from May 2010 - April 2011 to Afghanistan. He was appointed to Command Sergeant Major for the 1 / 147th Field Artillery in January 2012 through August 2015 when he retired.



Todd enjoys the outdoors by archery hunting, fishing, golfing and camp fires with friends and family.

Todd can be reached at 605-882-6289 or veteran@codington.org.

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VET CENTERS UPDATE

During this pandemic, please remember the Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers are remaining open and continue to provide the following services:

- individual counseling (face-to-face, telehealth and phone visits)
- group counseling (telehealth)
- marital and family counseling
- military sexual trauma.

Please give them a call to schedule an appointment!

- Sioux Falls Vet Center (605) 330-4552
- Rapid City Vet Center (605) 348-0077.

THANK YOU FROM MJFSVH

The staff at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home extends their sincerest thanks for the outpouring of support with cloth mask donations.

In times of need the American spirit never seems to fail!

The Home has received an ample supply and feel confident their residents and staff are well taken care of.

The staff asks that if you have the time and supplies; to continue your efforts and redirect them to local VA facilities or other health care facilities in your area who may be in need.



MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY WHITLOCK

For many of us the month of April has challenged us, but being the resilient South Dakotans that we are, we have saddled up and are ready for the long ride. We took control of the reins as we knew we were on this ride for the long haul. We stayed connected with those around us using many forms of social media and technology. We've shaped our character and we have found numerous ways to make each day meaningful.

These have not been easy times in our community, our state, our nation, and even our world as we met the challenges COVID-19 dealt us. We have been challenged to meet new challenges, adapt to change, and most importantly, to continue to care for one another.

Perhaps Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

As April comes to a close, and May is just around the corner, I want to take this opportunity to remind you that we have thousands of people who once again demonstrated their resilience by serving and defending this great country. May is Military Appreciation month, a month that provides us great opportunities to remember, recognize, and appreciate those who have served in the past and those now serving, as well as their families.

National Military Appreciation month includes: Loyalty Day (May 1), Victory in Europe Day (May 8), Military Spouse Appreciation Day (May 8), Armed Forces Day (May 16); and Memorial Day (May 25).

Each of those days provides an opportunity to learn more about military members and the families who have given of themselves to support the principles we hold dear and the freedom we enjoy. Heroes, who set aside their personal lives and safety, to defend and protect our families, our communities, and our nation from those who would threaten our way of life.

This pandemic has challenged us in ways we never thought possible. We have found new ways to work, to teach, to celebrate, to serve the Lord, to shop, and so much more. Through it all we have grown and we have created a new legacy. I challenge each of you to find new ways to honor our heroes during the month of May.

This is an amazing state. Leaders are making good decisions and partners are working together for the common good.

As we have been saying — we are in this together, we will get through this together.



MAY IS NATIONAL MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Governor Kristi Noem has proclaimed May as “National Military Appreciation Month,” a time for all to honor, remember, recognize and appreciate those who have served in the past and those now serving, as well as their families.

“The vigilance of the members of the Armed Forces has been instrumental to the preservation of freedom, security and prosperity enjoyed by the people of this great nation,” Governor Noem said. “Our Armed Forces depend on the dedicated service of its members and their families.”

National Military Appreciation Month includes: Loyalty Day on May 1, Victory in Europe Day on May 8, Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 8, Armed Forces Day on May 16, and Memorial Day on May 25.

“The days provide an opportunity to honor, remember, recognize, and appreciate those who serve and have served,” said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “These men and women continue to play a major role in the development of our country documented through a history of uncompromising honor, dedication to duty and genuine love of country.”

For generations, brave Americans have stepped forward and answered our country's call to serve in our Armed Forces. With honor and distinction, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen fight to defend the principles upon which our country was founded. Behind these courageous Americans stand spouses, children, and parents who give up precious time with their loved ones, bearing the burden of long deployments and difficult moves, and oftentimes putting their careers on hold. During Military Month, we salute the families of those who proudly are a part of our Nation's unbroken chain of patriots for their unwavering devotion, and we renew our sacred vow to uphold our promise to our troops, our veterans, and their families.



VA HEALTH APP NOW AVAILABLE TO VETERANS ACROSS ALL MOBILE AND WEB PLATFORMS

Through public-private partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), since early April, all veterans have been able to securely connect to their health care data online.

Online veteran health care records first only available on iOS operating systems, are now also accessible on Android mobile devices and web applications.

[iBlueButton](#) and [MyLinks](#) are free health information exchange apps providing veterans the ability to securely access, manage, and interact with their health information. They also make it easier for veterans to set and achieve health care goals regardless of their device.

“Veterans having access across the board to mobile and web health app services increases interoperability and eases the flow of information, while keeping their personal data secure,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Data security and veteran’s consent are essential to maintaining trust and credibility with our stakeholders.”

A veteran must first authorize access to their health information using a VA-approved [authentication method](#) before an app can access their data. At any time, the veteran can revoke the privileges they’ve granted to these apps through their account settings on [VA.gov](#).

iBlueButton, which makes critical health care information readily available to the veteran, has been connected to VA’s [My HealtheVet](#) Blue Button since 2010. With this app, veterans can generate an organized medical history from both VA and Medicare. In December 2019, the iBlueButton applications used the new VA Health API to create a new feature that organizes and visualizes a veteran’s lab values.

MyLinks enables patients and caregivers to view and share aggregated health records, manage multiple family records, and store and share other important documents and images. Since January, MyLinks has leveraged the VA Health API to help veterans and their caregivers securely share health information across the veteran’s care team network of providers.

The apps allow the VA [application programming interfaces \(APIs\)](#) to be available for developer use through the [Lighthouse developer portal](#). Lighthouse is an API platform that gives developers secure access to the VA data they need to build helpful tools and services for veterans.



VA JOINS XPRIZE PANDEMIC ALLIANCE TO COMBAT COVID-19 AND FUTURE OUTBREAKS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it has partnered with the XPRIZE Foundation's Pandemic Alliance as part of a public and private coalition to help develop ways to address the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent global outbreaks.

The XPRIZE Pandemic Alliance partnership will help connect the VA's Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) with leaders from academia, the medical arena and private industry and encourage innovative ideas and techniques to further drive emergency preparedness solutions to address COVID-19.

"The VA has long played a central role in health care innovation and continues to demonstrate strong leadership in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Working with partner organizations in the XPRIZE Pandemic Alliance allows VA to utilize new tools and techniques to respond to COVID-19 and prepare new solutions to combat future pandemics."

In the immediate term, the XPRIZE Pandemic Alliance will focus on accelerating solutions for remote care and telehealth, provisioning personal protective equipment, and increasing COVID-19 test access and availability. VHA IE's National Center for Collaborative Healthcare Innovation (NCCHI) will provide thought leadership, public health expertise, and insight on feasibility and scalability of ideas to the XPRIZE Pandemic Alliance.

National Center for Collaborative Healthcare Innovation



Through the Alliance launch partner and health benefits company Anthem, XPRIZE partners will have access to one of the largest certified de-identified data sets. This includes years of longitudinal data of prior viral outbreaks, which will allow researchers and innovators to develop and model new approaches in response to a pandemic.

XPRIZE is a nonprofit organization aiming to spark technological development projects that solve societal grand challenges to benefit humanity.

NCCHI, located at the Palo Alto VA Medical Center, will serve as the leader through the duration of the year-long partnership.



VABHHCS JOINS COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO KICK OFF MAY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

On Friday May 1, 2020, VA Black Hills Health Care System (VA BHHCS) along with several community partners will kick off a month of education and raising awareness for mental health wellness.

On May 1st, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. individuals will be located throughout the downtown area of Rapid City and at the entrances to the Fort Meade and Hot Spring VA campuses holding signs with inspirational messages and resources like the Veterans Crisis Line.

The informal event is intended to share messages of hope and encouragement to reach out during these challenging times.

Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures, and out of concern for veterans, the groups will be sharing resources in unique ways to honor physical distancing guidelines.

For more information about VA's response to mental health care visit:


https://www.va.gov/QUALITYOFCARE/education/Mental_Health_Awareness_Month.asp

MAKE THE CONNECTION | **USE YOUR VOICE**

f t e

This Mental Health Awareness Month, let everyone know that recovery is possible.


Start a Conversation
With a Veteran You Know



Share a Message of Support

I'm speaking up to support our Nation's Veterans

USE YOUR VOICE



LEARN HOW →

SHARE TWEET EMAIL

VA WORKS WITH COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE TO MEET CRITICAL NEED FOR BLOOD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its participating medical centers across the country kicked-off blood drives in late April — partnering with the [American Red Cross](#) and community organizations — in response to the ongoing national need for blood during the coronavirus disease 2020 public health emergency.

Healthy individuals are encouraged to participate in the ongoing [Share Your Health, Roll Up Your Sleeve Today](#) blood drives hosted by VA medical centers and staffed by the Red Cross or other local blood collection centers.

“As a leader in health care, the VA has an obligation to step forward to offer this support to our nation,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilke. “This is an important opportunity for citizens nationwide to support their communities.”

By leveraging the VA’s resources to ensure vital blood and blood products are available for patients, the VA is exercising its “Fourth Mission” to provide back-up health services to the nation in times of disaster.

Those wishing to donate blood can visit [Red Cross Blood](#) to schedule an appointment. In some areas, the VA works with other regional blood collection centers to host blood drives. The VA hosted blood drives are scheduled on a rolling basis. Check the Red Cross or VA medical center websites for specific dates.

[Federal guidance](#) states blood donors are exempt from “stay at home” orders to participate in this life-saving activity. VA and the American Red Cross have also adopted [additional precautions](#) including requiring masks and social distancing measures at all blood drives to ensure the safety of donors and staff.



VA ESTABLISHES THE DEPARTMENT'S FIRST HISTORY OFFICE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) established the VA History Office (VAHO), April 10, to formally collect and preserve the department's history.

The VAHO will consist of the VA History Program (VAHP) and National VA History Center (NVAHC) and serve as the principal VA-wide management office for centralized VA historical initiatives.

The mission of VAHO is to develop an overarching program to collect, preserve and provide access to VA's relevant historical records and artifacts to tell a comprehensive story of VA and its predecessor organizations.

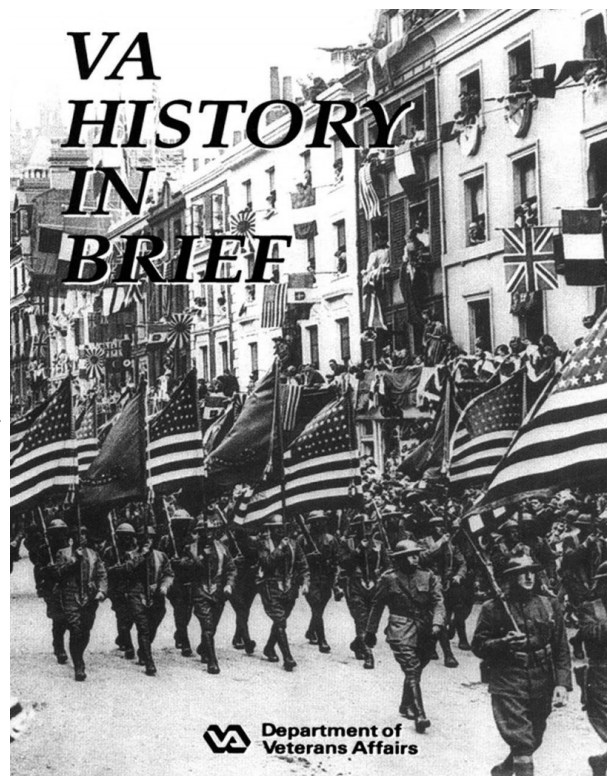
"VA is one of the few cabinet-level agencies without an official history office," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The new office will allow the department to document the special relationship between the nation and our veterans."

The vision is to promote understanding and study of the unique relationship between the United States and its veterans through the lens of the VA experience — the care of wounds, the benefits bestowed, the contributions of veterans to society after serving, and the [honors provided at their passing](#).

When fully functional, VAHP will research and respond to inquiries regarding [VA history](#) and support VA leaders in their decision-making process by providing ready access to department experiences from the past. The program will also manage historical publication projects and establish an oral history program to capture the experiences of senior officials and long-tenured employees to be included in department archives.

NVAHC will be located in Dayton, Ohio on the campus of the historic VA Medical Center that originally served as a [National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers](#) following the Civil War. Two historic buildings on the campus were previously identified for use as a centralized museum and archive for VA. The department is partnering with the VA History Center Foundation to fund renovations for the historic buildings.

The National VA History Center is tentatively forecasted for a 2025 opening based on public funding availability and private fundraising. For more information contact VAHistoryOffice@va.gov.



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1—Loyalty Day
May 8—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—10:00 am (MT)
May 8—Victory in Europe Day
May 8—Military Spouse Appreciation Day
May 10—Mothers Day
May 16—Armed Forces Day
May 20—SDDVA Skype Mini Conference—10:00 am (CT)
May 25—Memorial Day
May 25—State Offices closed
Jun 3-7—VFW State Convention—Aberdeen
Jun 14—Flag Day
Jun 21—Fathers Day
Jun 27—DAV State Convention—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
Jul 6—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Jul 10—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Bldg. 145—Room 108—Fort Meade VAMC—10:00 am (MT)
Aug 22—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7
Aug 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota Conference Center—Pierre
Sep 3—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
Sep 3-7—SD State Fair
Sep 5—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8
Sep 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Sep 19—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 9
Oct 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 10
Oct 26-30—National Summit on Women Veterans Issues (more information coming)
Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)

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